

VZCZCXYZ0017

OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDM #0600 1650912

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

O 140912Z JUN 07

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3700

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 000600

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AODE](#) [AMGT](#) [KMRS](#) [MASS](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: POST APPROVES NSDD 38 - U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY REQUEST TO ADD ONE SCHOLAR POSITION IN SYRIA

REF: A. STATE 71480

[1](#)B. NSDD 38 CASE NUMBER DOD-SYR-37736-5212007

[1](#)1. Post approves this NSDD 38 Department of Defense, Department of Army request to add one Olmsted scholar position in Syria, for an appointment of limited duration. While this proposed staffing change is not reflected in the most recent MSP, post believes that DOD has made a persuasive case for posting an Olmsted scholar here in Damascus to study Arabic. Syria is considered one of the best places, linguistically, to study Arabic in the Middle East, with rich possibilities for language immersion unavailable in most neighboring countries, given the limited number of Syrians who speak English here. Such an appointment could not have been anticipated during the MPP/MSP process. This is not a permanent appointment and will not affect the 2012 projections in post's recent rightsizing report.

[1](#)2. We believe approval of this position will advance mission's overall goals, including enhancing mutual understanding and people-to-people contacts (Mission Strategic Plan goal number seven) and represents a USG long-term investment towards accomplishing other key foreign policy goals, including preventing and responding to terrorism, and achieving peace and security. There are no other resources at Post that could perform the function of an Olmsted scholar nor could this function be accomplished by TDY, FSN, or contract work. The Olmsted Scholarship Program provides valuable training in foreign cultures, with scholars returning to the Army, often working as Foreign Area Officers. With the need for area and language expertise, especially in a hard language like Arabic, this scholarship is invaluable.

[1](#)3. Post believes the benefits of temporarily increasing staffing outweigh inherent security risks associated with additional personnel. This is especially true since Post's key threat is an attack on the Embassy, (especially in light of the lack of adequate setback), and the scholar will rarely be inside the Embassy, certainly not on a regular basis, minimizing exposure to this risk and thus not raising appreciably the overall security exposure of Mission personnel. Nonetheless, Post does face a residual security threat and scholar posted here should understand that in the event of some sort of attack on the Embassy or on Embassy personnel, her studies here could be truncated in the event of a drawdown of Mission personnel.

[1](#)4. Post will provide minimal administrative support to the scholar under ICASS and estimates the cost on an annual basis to be approximately \$7,600. The scholar is not expected to be present at the embassy on a regular basis, and, hence, will not require office space, furniture or equipment. Further, she will not occupy furnished government-owned or -leased quarters. The major post support will involve clearing a personally-owned vehicle and household goods. Post will also provide assistance in securing a diplomatic ID

card and a multiple entry visa (and its subsequent extension of the visa as necessary), medical support and mail services.

The scholar must be able to sign ICASS invoices or have that authority delegated to the DAO in Damascus as she will be the sole representative of her specific agency/office at post. The scholar will be encouraged to exhaust all other options before relying on embassy support.

15. POC at Post for follow-up is John Finnegan, Jr., Management Counselor.

ROEBUCK